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“STRANGER IN THE NIGHT”?  
A CANADIAN ON THE CZECH-POLISH  
BORDERLAND DURING WORLD WAR I:  
THE CASE OF WILLIAM JOHN ROSE

For many intellectuals from Central and Eastern Europe World War I was a time of personal tragedies. A lot of them lost their loved ones, fought on battlefields, were killed, became crippled for life or otherwise afflicted. That conflict, one of the most violent in the history of Europe and the world, changed a whole generation. For many scholars it was also a time of redefining their views or research interests. Some devoted their skills, energy and time to the state propaganda. A few tried to keep away from the events of the Great War, focusing on family life and their previous research, convinced that non-involvement would spare them and allow to lead life as usual. However, the first months of the hostilities in 1914 soon dispelled their illusions. One could be a passive observer on the fringes of the Continent, but not in the heart of it.

In this article I would like to present William John Rose, a Canadian, who, as a British subject, was interned on the Polish-Czech border by Austrian authorities. He was not a typical participant in the war. Like in Frank Sinatra's song "Strangers in the Night," Rose found himself a stranger on an unfamiliar territory during the "war night." In Sinatra's song the characters exchange furtive glances, wondering whether they would be able to share love before the night is through. For Rose the reality of wartime and the enforced internment were a chance to learn about the Polish-Czech relations and re-examine himself; re-investigate his interests and find a brand new idea for his future

life. The “war night,” not so short after all, had to suffice to redefine himself and his future career.<sup>1</sup>

Among the research problems I am interested in and would like to find answers to are the reasons why Rose changed the nature of his career. What I find interesting is the environment he became forced to live in and which influenced him to a great extent. Having mostly used Rose’s unknown personal diaries, I am going to analyze his self-creation in both the personal notes and the texts he published. They allow us to establish what themes interested him back then and how the war beyond the front line changed him and influenced his world-view. Hopefully, this individual experience will let us explore the fate people interned during World War I, for whom it was not always time lost.

## WILLIAM JOHN ROSE

Rose was born on 7 August 1885 on a farm near the town of Minnedosa in the Canadian province Manitoba as the son of Henry (a missionary, evangelical priest, local community worker and farmer) and Prudence McKinney. He came from a large family.<sup>2</sup> Between 1900 and 1905 he studied the classics and graduated with distinction from Wesley College, the church school in nearby Winnipeg. Sent to Magdalen College, Oxford, as Rhodes Scholar 1905–1908, thanks to superior performance in Greek and Latin, he got B.A. Third Class in Literae Humaniores. Then he returned to Wesley College as a lecturer in classics and mathematics. In 1912 he felt he still needed further training, so he returned to Europe to get his doctorate in Germany, where his newlywed wife Emily Mary James Cuthbert wished to study music. In 1912 he enrolled at the Leipzig University, from where a year later he moved to Berlin. Emily accompanied him on a journey around Europe. While attending a summer conference of the Student Christian Movement, one of many national movements in relationship with the World Student Christian Federation and with the Young Men’s Christian Association which Rose had first joined in Winnipeg as an undergraduate, he agreed to cut short his studies in order to go to Prague as a “student-secretary” and a represent-

<sup>1</sup> Cf.: Andrzej A. Zięba, “Rose William John,” in *Polski słownik biograficzny*, vol. 32, eds. Emanuel Rostworowski and Henryk Markiewicz (Wrocław: Zakład Narodowy im. Ossolińskich – Wydawnictwo Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 1991), 50–52; Jędrzej S. Kwiatek, “William John Rose o Śląsku Cieszyńskim,” *Kwartalnik Opolski* 1 (2008): 21–33; Tomasz Pułocki, *Ambasadorzy idei. Wkład intelektualistów w promowanie pozytywnego wizerunku Polski w Wielkiej Brytanii w latach 1918–1939* (Cracow: Historia Jagellonica, 2015), after the index.

<sup>2</sup> University of British Columbia Archives (hereafter: UBCA), William Rose funds, Box 5, Folder 10 The Rose Family Files.

ative of the World's Student Christian Federation. His duties consisted of forming study groups of young people interested in social problems and, if possible, moving them into the realm of practical solutions to these problems through volunteer work.<sup>3</sup>

On arrival in Central Europe, Rose was very much the "innocent abroad," aware of the nationalist problems afflicting the Austro-Hungarian empire, but not understanding them. He unwittingly offended both Czechs and Germans on occasion, which resulted in painful personal experiences and, subsequently, a new consciousness. Despite having trouble getting about in the world of complicated German-Czech relations, Rose travelled a lot and met a lot of outstanding Czech intellectuals and politicians, like Dr. Jan Karafiát, Dr. Anton Frinta, Dr. Edvard Beneš, or Prof. Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk and his daughter Dr. Alice Garrigue Masaryková. Beneš was one of the participants in the so-called Easter Conference, which Rose co-organized for young people in Komorní Lhotka in a Polish district of Cieszyn Silesia. It attracted a few dozen participants — activists of the Student Christian Movement. Among the organizers were Robert P. Wilder (a foreign student secretary of the British SCM)<sup>4</sup> and John Raleigh Mott. The latter was the national secretary of the Intercollegiate Committee of the YMCA of the USA and Canada (1888–1915) and also served as chairman of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions (1915–28). He was an American Methodist evangelist active in world service and a winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946. Mott organized student missionary movements and united churches around the world in an effort to promote peace and world alliance.<sup>5</sup>

Encouraged by the conference success, already knowing the German language, Rose started learning Czech. Much of his time was given to the preparation for the three-week summer school planned for late July and early August once more in Komorní Lhotka.<sup>6</sup>

The Roses were not the first Canadians in that region. As early as 1908 Polish and Canadian Methodists established a collaboration in order to intensify pastoral work among the immigrants who came to Canada in large numbers from Central and Eastern Europe. The first to accept the Winnipeg's

<sup>3</sup> *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, ed. Daniel Stone (Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1975), XI.

<sup>4</sup> *The Princeton Alumni Weekly* 14, no. 27 (1914): 563. See more: James A. Patterson, "The Legacy of Robert P. Wilder," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 15, no. 1 (1991): 26–32.

<sup>5</sup> Cf.: William J. Rose, *Duch i praca Chrześcijańskiego Związku Młodych Ludzi w Ameryce* (Warsaw: Biblioteka Filomacka, 1920), 28; Kwiatek, "William John Rose o Śląsku Cieszyńskim," 23.

<sup>6</sup> *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, 9–19; William J. Rose, "Prague Days, 1914," *The Spirit of Czechoslovakia* 4, no. 4–5 (1943): 36.

City Mission Board's offer to go to Europe to explore the life and language of the Poles was Edmund Chambers. He was sent to the Silesia-Galicia borderland by Canadian Methodists as a novice, candidate for a priest. In his letters to William and his own brother Arthur he described his reflections and impressions. Some were very apt:

In Austrian Silesia, where I am living, the townspeople are mostly German while the people in the country are mainly Polish. It is the only part of Austria where Protestantism predominates, and many a hard struggle the people have had for their principles.... Among the numerous Slavic races of Austria is great opposition to the German people and language; I noticed it particularly in Prague the Bohemian capital, and Krakow the capital of Austrian Poland.<sup>7</sup>

In 1911 Chambers married a Polish woman.<sup>8</sup> On his return to Canada, between 1911 and 1914, he was a priest in the All People's parish in Winnipeg and a delegate of *Macierz Śląska* in Cieszyn.<sup>9</sup> Arthur O. Rose, William's younger brother (b. 8 Feb. 1888), followed in Chambers' footsteps. A Polish Protestant Paweł Kupka was offered a trip to Canada.<sup>10</sup> Thus Arthur ended up on the Polish-Czech borderland — in Komorní Lhotka. He travelled around the Cieszyn Silesia and Galicia and even studied at the Jagiellonian University for a short time. Arthur brought the Student Christian Movement secretary from Vienna, Eberhard Phildius, a Swiss, into touch with the local pastor Karol Kulisz. Arthur came back to Canada in the fall of 1912, but the very next year it was decided to buy a large summer villa that was standing empty near the village for the use of student conferences and the like, and money was got, chiefly in London, for the purpose.<sup>11</sup> A rich correspondence William received from Chambers and his own brother was a chance for him to better learn about the problems of the Polish-Czech borderland, though he couldn't have expected that part of the world would become a turning point in his life.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 1, Folder 4, Letter from E. Chambers, Oct 1909.

<sup>8</sup> George Emery, *The Methodist Church on the Prairies, 1896–1914* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 152.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 149; *XVII Sprawozdanie Macierzy Szkolnej Ks.[ięstwa] Cieszyńskiego za rok 1912* (Cieszyn 1913), 97–98.

<sup>10</sup> Emery, *Methodist Church*, 152.

<sup>11</sup> William J. Rose, "The Calling of Silesia," *The Christian Guardian* (Toronto), 25 June 1919, 10.

<sup>12</sup> Arthur wrote very accurate and detailed letters to William, sharing different observations with him. See UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 1, Folder 14. Cf.: Tomasz Pułocki, "Z dziejów protestantów w Przemysłu przed I wojną światową — Arthur Osborne Rose i kanadyjskie spojrzenie na miasto z 1911 roku," *Przemyski Przegląd Kulturalny*, no. 36–37 (2016): 34–38.

## THE OUTBREAK OF THE WAR AND THE INTERNMENT

Reading W.J. Rose's memoirs written years later, one may get the impression that for him, like for many others, the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914 was but an insignificant incident. William and his wife Emily travelled around the Slovakia-Hungary borderland and then devoted themselves to working in a summer school.

The outbreak of the war was a great surprise for the Roses.<sup>13</sup> Paradoxically, instead of leaving as soon as possible (being citizens of Austria-Hungary's enemy country), the Roses decided not to do anything. They acted as if the whole war turmoil was not going to affect them at all; it is hard to say why. Was it young people's naivety, a strong religious belief in the peaceful solution of the conflict or a complete lack of understanding of the reality? Perhaps a bit of everything.

Starting from 26 July Rose began writing a diary, which in a way renders his experiences of three war years (1914, 1915 and 1918). His notes are rather concise, irregular and hardly legible; still, they let us reconstruct his and his wife's everyday life at the time. He stopped keeping the notes on 18 June 1915 to return to them on 1 January 1918. As he wrote, "After 3 ½ years of war in which I was afraid to put down my thoughts, I have decided to risk it — and hope now until the end to keep some sort of record of what I try to do, and what I'm thinking about."<sup>14</sup>

It is clear from his notes that the couple did not understand the consequences of the conflict, which was getting more and more real. They were concerned about giving up the summer school and being left by their friends, especially Eberhard Phildius and one of the leaders of The Student Christian Movement, Elizabeth Morris Clark.<sup>15</sup> They watched a lot of their new friends being called up and they sensed the atmosphere of uncertainty in Silesia, but nothing changed their attitude. They would stroll around, read, visit friends (particularly Rev. Kulisz and his family) and discuss the changing European reality and the rumors which were rarely confirmed. Although Rose used to read newspapers in German and Polish (including the Cracow *Czas*) regularly, registering the news from the front lines, one may get the impression that war was for him something so remote as to be unreal.<sup>16</sup> One can hardly blame him, as he was not the only one. As Katarzyna Sierakowska's research proves, for many

<sup>13</sup> *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, 23.

<sup>14</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary 1918, 1 Jan.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. Diary notes 1914–1915, 25, 27, 29 July 1914. More on E.M. Clark: Thomas Arthur Russel, *Women Leaders in the Student Christian Movement: 1880–1920* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2017).

<sup>16</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary notes 1914–1915, 3, 7 Aug 1914.

Europeans the war started only with an actual experience of hostilities or a dramatic change in their lifestyle.<sup>17</sup>

In the first weeks the only effect of the war for the Roses was that they stopped getting letters from family and friends. They did not even seem moved by the fact that Great Britain declared war on Austria-Hungary on 12 August. Indeed, on 16 August Rose noted down that he might get arrested but added that fortunately he was among friends, and besides he could find himself some practical job. Paradoxically, however, even though money had run out, Rose spent the August going to church services, reading and hiking.<sup>18</sup> When finally first letters from friends came at the end of the month, in which they advised him to leave, he and his wife decided to stay put, what with the lack of money and uncertain situation.<sup>19</sup>

With the changing situation on the Eastern Front, Rose's notes assumed an increasingly Austrian-oriented point of view. He was sad when the Russians captured L'viv, worried by uncertain news on the war and lack of news from his friend Jan Kozieł who lived in the Fortress of Przemyśl. When Rose eventually got a letter from Kozieł on 8 September, he put down his impressions of the situation in Przemyśl... in German. The two friends must have written to each other in that language.<sup>20</sup> The "Austrian" viewpoint is seen in his diary also in the following months. For instance, on 13 September he wrote: "... the Russians have outflanked our troops ..."<sup>21</sup> He made it a rule to perceive the Russians as enemies. When the Austrian troops managed to liberate Przemyśl from the Russian siege, Rose made no attempt to hide his contentment, the more so as he started to get letters from Kozieł again.<sup>22</sup> Adopting the new viewpoint stemmed from being among the people for which the Russians were enemies and from keeping in touch mainly with those friends who perceived them in the same way.

The Russians getting closer and the stories told by refugees from Eastern Galicia made the Roses decide to leave for Prague. Having agreed by letter the details with their friends from Vienna and Prague, on 29 September William went to Cieszyn with Rev. Kulisz to get a permission to leave. Ironically enough, when they finally made the decision to leave Silesia, they were forbidden to do it.<sup>23</sup> The Roses were not arrested as citizens of a country

<sup>17</sup> Katarzyna Sierakowska, *Śmierć, wygnanie, głód w dokumentach osobistych. Ziemie polskie w latach Wielkiej Wojny 1914–1918* (Warsaw: Instytut Historii PAN, 2015), 45–58.

<sup>18</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary notes 1914–1915, 16, 22, 27 Aug 1914.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 28 Aug 1914.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, 4, 6, 8 Sept 1914.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 13 Sept 1914.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 17 Oct 1914.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 29 Sept 1914.

with which Austria waged war, but they were forbidden to leave the place where they stayed under the supervision of Austrian authorities until the fall of the Habsburg monarchy. A Polish official in the Cieszyn district suggested they should maintain a low profile and abandon the plans to go to Prague, where the anti-Austrian feelings were strong. He did not explain why it was the anti-Austrian attitude of the Czechs that could be a problem for the Canadians, but the message was clear — they had to stay put.<sup>24</sup>

## EVERYDAY LIFE BEYOND THE FRONT LINES

Paradoxically enough, the internment finished the period of uncertainty in the Roses' life. They could remain in the house in Lhotka and decide how to fill their days. At first Rose's diary was still full of the news from various fronts — mainly the eastern and western ones. He also started to notice different social nuances, which had eluded his observation earlier. Years later he wrote:

Silesia being the great railway and industrial centre of that part of Europe, has been wholly in the hands of the German administrators whether political or financial. Coal mines, iron works and railroads having capital at their backs have had the power. The Pole, the Czech and the Slovak have been the hewers of wood and drawers of water. The country, as a result, is full of renegades, people who have become German or Austrian because it pays. They worship the golden image and believe as far as they are able in the divine calling of Deutsche Kultur. These people were from the start our sworn enemies and their enmity increased in proportion as they saw that England was the real menace, the real obstacle to Prussian domination in Europe.<sup>25</sup>

The systematic entries in his diary prove that week after week Rose was less and less of a stranger in the community and comprehended much more than before. The Roses got quickly integrated with the locals, receiving from them a lot of help and tokens of friendship, and started adopting their worldview. Already in late October 1914, along with the information about more or less likely defeats of the Germans, Rose reported the rumors on the scandalous behavior of the Hungarians in Galicia, who treated the local people worse than the Russians.<sup>26</sup>

Komorní Lhotka was for Rose a kind of microcosm in which political, ethnic and religious problems of the Habsburg Monarchy were focused.<sup>27</sup> It is no wonder

<sup>24</sup> *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, 25.

<sup>25</sup> William J. Rose, "In Darkest Europe and the Way Out," *Winnipeg Free Press* (1 Feb 1919): 1.

<sup>26</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary notes 1914–1915, 23 Oct 1914.

<sup>27</sup> Kwiatek, "William John Rose o Śląsku Cieszyńskim," 24.

then that the Roses, staying mainly among the Poles, soon ended up as potential targets of the German residents of the region. On 5 February 1915 Rose noted down his reaction to the anti-English poster he saw at the post office, put up by the primary school director. Rose was shocked by its message, as it was explicitly directed against him and his wife. The poster read: "Now they'll be paid for their villainy for causing such bloodshed." Rose was astonished by the "lack of politeness," which he attributed to the Germanization of Silesia.<sup>28</sup> There followed reports of the director's anti-British remarks, which the schoolchildren — members of the Evangelical Church of the Augsburg Confession — repeated at home and their parents passed on to the Roses. William also realized that the Czechs and the Poles were not particularly fond of each other.<sup>29</sup> In fact ethnic and religious divisions were common in the Cieszyn Silesia; even his closest friends had experienced them. Rev. Kulisz considered himself Polish and raised his children in the Polish spirit, whereas his own brother, who had married a German woman, changed his identity to German and the local Poles considered him a renegade.<sup>30</sup>

In January 1915 the Roses applied again for the permission to leave Lhotka but again they were rejected.<sup>31</sup> As William recalled years later:

It was a terrible time for the first year, until one got one's bearings. The suspense was almost unbearable at times. Finally the task of learning the Czech language for work in Prague had to be abandoned, as the community was Polish; and the latter language was begun. A year and a half sufficed to get enough meeting in connection with Pastor Kulisz, who was to the writer brother and friend and father all the time. In spite of war confictions a small beginning of new things was achieved.<sup>32</sup>

Living among the Silesians, Rose decided to get to know the local language and customs better. His guide and best teacher was Rev. Kulisz. It was thanks to his attitude, hard work and moral authority that Rose had decided to learn Polish.<sup>33</sup> Pastor Karol Kulisz was remembered as one of the finest shepherds Rose

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<sup>28</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary notes 1914–1915, 5 Feb 1915. See also: *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, 28.

<sup>29</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary notes 1914–1915, 8 Feb 1915.

<sup>30</sup> *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, 33; Kwiatek, "William John Rose o Śląsku Cieszyńskim," 24.

<sup>31</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary notes 1914–1915, 30 Jan 1915.

<sup>32</sup> Rose, "The Calling of Silesia," 10.

<sup>33</sup> William J. Rose, "Memories of Cracow City and University," in *Alma Mater Jagellonica. The Sixth Centennial of the University of Cracow, Poland* (New York: The Polish Institute of Arts and Sciences in America, Canadian Branch, 1964), 6.



had ever known, a man of integrity and devotion to his work. His wife was full of charm and practical knowledge.<sup>34</sup>

In the first one and a half years of the war Rose connected his future with the Czechs and the Czech language.<sup>35</sup> As he recalled, even in the fall of 1915 he planned to publish a propaganda leaflet in Czech in Prague but those plans fell through. Despite the failure, it was then that, as he emphasized in his diary, the time of uncertainty was over, and Rose, influenced by his closest environment, started to learn Polish culture, art, history and philosophy. He was mainly surrounded by the Poles, so the choice seemed logical. Rose read the writings by August Cieszkowski, *Reflections on National Education* by Stanisław Szczepanowski, and *History of Polish Literature* by Ignacy Chrzanowski. However, it was above all *Księgi Narodu i pielgrzymstwa polskiego* by Adam Mickiewicz and Krasiński's *Psalmy przyszłości* that he was most impressed with.<sup>36</sup>

He also got engaged in religious and community work. Thanks to Rev. Kulisz's charisma, Lhotka had become a center of missionary work for the local Protestants. A girls' biblical study school was run, a hospice and hospital for the elderly and for disabled children, finally a deaconess institute was established. In all those institutions the Roses worked as volunteers, trying to forget the misery of their internment.<sup>37</sup>

While in Lhotka, Rose was not cut off from the outside world. His private archive includes a lot of letters. Although in his diary he complained about censorship, he hardly ever recorded a missing letter that he knew had been sent to him. He maintained regular correspondence above all with Phildius, Motte and Clark. He was also in touch with Karl Fries, founder and president of Kristliga studentvärldsförbundet (Christian Student Union) in Stockholm.<sup>38</sup> In the fall of 1914 Phildius and Mott cruised between the Netherlands, Berlin and Vienna, trying to get the Roses moved from Silesia to Switzerland or to the Vatican. Occasionally Phildius would come to Lhotka during the war, bringing money and news from the world. The former was inasmuch important as the Roses did not have any savings and they lived mainly off their Polish friends. They did not have warm clothes and everyday articles were getting increasingly expensive. It is worth remembering, however, that thanks to their connections and friends, the Roses had been getting regular support already since the fall

<sup>34</sup> *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, 47–52.

<sup>35</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary notes 1914–1915, 19 Sept, 6, 23 Oct, 11 Nov 1914.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. Diary 1918, 1 Jan. See also: *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, 54–56.

<sup>37</sup> W.J. Rose, "In Darkest Europe and the Way Out," *Winnipeg Free Press* (1 Feb 1919): 1; Kwiatek, "William John Rose o Śląsku Cieszyńskim," 24.

<sup>38</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 1, Folder 9, 11.

of 1914; therefore it is hard to regard their wartime situation as typical.<sup>39</sup> No wonder then that on 15 December 1914 Rose noted down: “Things are good here. We have plenty to eat and plenty of money. I got a lot of stuff for Emily again today, who is up to the ears in Christmas preparations.”<sup>40</sup>

Naturally, Rose discerned the shortages of goods and provisions, which could be felt as early as the spring of 1915, yet even though the Roses’ situation got much worse money- and food-wise, they were still far from the problems which affected the average Central European, even beyond the front line. Moreover, from the fall of 1916 Rose could fairly easily explore the closer and farther neighborhood and enjoy the beauty of local nature. His guide was usually Rev. Kulisz. In the summer of 1918 they even managed to climb Radhošť — a mountain in the Moravian-Silesian Beskids, from which he could admire the Moravian Plain.<sup>41</sup>

## ROSE AS A CHRISTIAN WRITER

In the fall of 1915 Rose published texts in a Polish-language magazine *Wśród Walki* (Fighting the Battle) under a pseudonym Jan Różycki.<sup>42</sup> The magazine came out in Kocobędz (today Chotěbuz in the Czech Republic), a village near Lhotka, though its office was in Vienna. It was a Polish-language organ of the Student Christian Movement (or World’s Student Christian Federation). Its authors wrote about self-improvement, ethics, human relations and religion. Rose’s texts suited the editors’ politics perfectly. The articles were printed in Polish and apparently were Rose’s own first attempts to write in this language (or they were written with the help of Rev. Kulisz).<sup>43</sup> They show well the values Rose tried to follow during the war and which he promoted in his evangelizing work with the young generation.

In the article “Wpływ osobisty” (Personal influence) he focused on the significance of interpersonal relations. In this popular text on the philosophical and moral theme Rose discussed the phenomenon of people’s influence on individuals, appealing to their sense of responsibility to do good. He quoted a lot of examples from history and literature and did not fail to include Polish figures,

<sup>39</sup> *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, 27–28; see also many fragments in the memoirs.

<sup>40</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary notes 1914–1915, 19 Sept, 6, 23 Oct, 15 Dec 1914.

<sup>41</sup> *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, 40–42.

<sup>42</sup> W.J. Rose wrote his real name by hand near the name Jan Różycki on the copies preserved in UBCA; the nom de plume itself is very simple — it is a Polonized form of his name.

<sup>43</sup> Rose translated J.R. Mott’s texts from English: “Moc Jezusa Chrystusa w życiu akademickim” (Jesus Christ’s Power in Academic Life) also published in *Wśród Walki*, no. 5 (1916): 13–18.

like Stanisław Konarski, Andrzej Towiański and Juliusz Słowacki. Rose called the latter "our poet," which shows how much he had become part of Polish culture and identified with it. According to Rose, geniuses (outstanding individuals), through the power of their spirit can ennoble those who are morally lower. The best teacher, however, had always been Jesus Christ, who "... appealed to man's ultimate longing, to those God particles which make people different from animals. He rejected violence in any form, and strongly warned against yielding in to sensual pleasures. He lived a life without and so he could raise others to his own level."<sup>44</sup>

Christ as man's best friend is the subject of another article called "Przyjaźń" (Friendship). In it Rose encouraged the readers to search for a soul mate that one can find only through exploring one's own soul and one's needs. Solitude and focusing on oneself allows one to relax and recognize the situation he is in. According to the author man will always find the greatest friend in Jesus, who helps us to break free from any bonds and limitations, thus supporting us in in-depth development.<sup>45</sup> Similar arguments are present in Rose's text called "Odnowiciel" (The Reviver). Christ is a revolutionary fighting against hypocrisy and false leaders. Rose believes that only a change of leaders and ideas can lead to ending war and really reconstruct the world according to the Christian model and genuine peace.<sup>46</sup>

In the following issues of the monthly Rose elaborated on his thoughts. In the article titled "Odrodzenie" (Rebirth) he took up the topic of free will and decision-making. He defied fatalism and yielding to decisions of various forces. He emphasized that "the clearer the stand on the goals of our life is, the greater the firmness in finding our way at the crossroads, the truer the manliness."<sup>47</sup> The choice should always be based on the Platonic triad, i.e. beauty, truth and goodness. According to Rose, the right individual choices translate into the development of whole social groups and nations.<sup>48</sup>

Rose also made a selection of texts by August Cieszkowski to be published in the December issue of the *Wśród Walki*. That part ideally conforms to the editor's policy as well as to Rose's personal views — it is an attempt to answer the question about the meaning of life amidst continuing uncertainty. War, destruction, ubiquitous death, spiritual crisis, accompany people at the end of the second year of conflict. Like in other texts published in the monthly, also here Jesus Christ is shown as a panacea for all evil. Though the arguments are not new

<sup>44</sup> Jan Różycki [W.J. Rose], "Wpływ osobisty," *Wśród Walki*, no. 2 (1915): 18–20.

<sup>45</sup> Różycki, "Przyjaciel," *Wśród Walki*, no. 3 (1915): 8–9.

<sup>46</sup> Różycki, "Odnowiciel," *Wśród Walki*, no. 4 (1915): 14–16.

<sup>47</sup> Różycki, "Odrodzenie," *Wśród Walki*, no. 5 (1916): 10.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 10–12.

and have appeared in previous articles, this text shows Rose's growing interest in Polish philosophy.<sup>49</sup> Cieszkowski, an original 19th-century religious thinker, despite being a Catholic, was Rose's "soul brother." The first book on a Polish subject, which Rose had started work on already in 1915, was *The Desire of All Nations, Being an English Edition (Abridged) of August Cieszkowski's "Our Father."* It was published in London in 1919.

Rose mentioned that it was Rev. Kulisz who gave him Cieszkowski's writings to read. Kulisz would then go to Cracow to obtain extra explanations of Cieszkowski's philosophy with the help of Prof. Ignacy Chrzanowski, and he arranged for Rose to get a copy of Adam Żółtowski's PhD thesis *Graf August Cieszkowski's "Philosophie der Tot": die Grundzüge seiner Lehre und der Aufbau seines Systems* (Posen 1904.)<sup>50</sup>

Rose's (Różycki's) texts are not merely cheap affected religious bigotry. He refers in them to multiple examples from philosophy, art, history, music, trying to probe into the problem, show it from different perspectives, and does it in an accessible manner. An important point of reference in his texts are the Tatra Mountains — a sublime place where man experiences the grandeur of not only nature but also of God's work. To Rose, who grew up at a farm in the forested Manitoba, nature allowed to escape inside himself and explore his soul. In his texts, addressed mainly to war veterans, he stresses that manliness is above all moral power and getting mature while searching for inner harmony and eternal Truth. The whole life should therefore be devoted to becoming a new man.

That Rose was a very religious man, believing in what he wrote, is clearly seen in many entries in his diary. References to God, entrusting his life and his loved ones to Him, is a regular motif in his notes. Even when the news seemed hopeless, Rose tried not to lose hope. That concerned not only everyday things, family life but also the general situation. For instance, when on 23 March 1915 the news of the fall of the Przemyśl Fortress and the Russians' advantage reached Cieszyn, he noted down:

People generally very downcast. Say there is no hope which is of course nonsense. While there is life there's hope. It would be hard to judge from the papers what the real worth of Przemyśl was. Some cry sour grapes. All are agreed that it was of no further worth for Austria and that it can be of no use to the enemy. Well, we shall see.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>49</sup> August Cieszkowski, "Dokąd dążymy?" *Wśród Walki*, no. 4 (1915): 6–9.

<sup>50</sup> Rose, *Memoirs of Cracow*, 6; *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, 56.

<sup>51</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary notes 1914–1915, 23 March 1915.

## POLAND AS A NEW GOAL

During the war Rose read many books in English, French, German, Czech and Polish. He tried to get to know the history of the region, exploring the newly published Tomáš G. Masaryk's *Russland und Europa*, Henry Wickham Steed's *The Habsburg Monarchy* and great Russian and German classics. Some books, like *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* by Homer or *Hermann und Dorothea* by J.W. Goethe, he discussed with Maria Kulisz, the daughter of Rev. Kulisz, to whom he gave private tuition; returning to them gave him great pleasure. With Maria he also read fragments of history of Poland and selected Polish literature. Of *The Laments* by Jan Kochanowski he said, "they are certainly a treasure," and added, "How a great man sought comfort everywhere in literature and art, only to turn back to God!"<sup>52</sup> Other books he read for his own pleasure or inner development, like the famous novel *Granny* by Božena Němcová, or articles about the writings and life of John Calvin or Józef Maria Hoene-Wroński.

At the end of 1917 he got as present *The Life of Henry Drummond* by George Adam Smith (New York: Doubleday & McClure Company, 1898), "which put new ideas into my head." That book along with a biography of Dwight Lyman Moody made a great impression on him. As he noted in his diary, ever since then he had two goals: to live through Jesus and get to know Poland and its culture in order to assist the Polish nation in its development.<sup>53</sup> The people who were of enormous help and support to him in reaching both goals were his wife and the members of The Tuesday Bible Circle, which he had chaired since the fall of 1917. Before Christmas, thanks to Phildius's involvement, a conference was organized in Lhotka for young Evangelicals, after which Rose's resolution to work for Poland grew even stronger. He believed that the restoration of the Polish state would be a fact "without a parallel in history," which should be used for the spiritual development of Europe. In his New Year's deliberations of 1918 Rose had no doubts that the world of German values was going to fall; he was, however, afraid of the changes in the East, whose consequences were unpredictable: "The real humiliation of Russia must be that — the men who are speaking for it — at present are not its own sons, but are strangers within its gates. That is it the penalty of long oppression. The Czar in Siberia, the Jews in the palaces!"<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., Diary 1918, 11, 17 Jan. See also: *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, 53–54.

<sup>53</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary 1918, 1 Jan. The book in question is probably: William R. Moody, *The Life of Dwight R. Moody* (London: Morgan & Scott, 1900). Cf.: Kevin Belmonte, *D.L. Moody: A Life: Innovator, Evangelist, World-Changer* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2014).

<sup>54</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary 1918, 1 Jan.

Despite the doubts and the fears about what course the war would take, Rose's notes of 1918 concern two main issues: evangelization of the people and enhancing the "Polishness," his own and that of his environment. Even the most down-to-earth everyday problems seem to be subjected to those two goals. Moreover, if in the years 1914–1915 he often made notes in German, the 1918 ones are full of interjections (single words and whole sentences) in Polish.

At that time Rose gained such mastery in using Polish that he tried to communicate in that language — not only with the Kulisz family but also with some friends staying at Lhotka, Gnojnik, Frydek Mistek or Cieszyn, the places he was allowed to visit. Among the people with whom he discussed the future of Poland was e.g. a popular local teacher Jan Kubisz, the Austro-Hungarian and Polish diplomat Karol Pindór, who would come from Vienna to visit his father, local pastor, and an engineer from Przemyśl Jan Kozieł, who sometimes dropped by to Lhotka.<sup>55</sup> On 4 February 1918 in Orłowa Rose had a chance to meet the director of a Polish *gimnazjum* Józef Kazimierz Piątkowski. He knew his wartime past and involvement in community work in Galicia and the Cieszyn Silesia. He first met him not in his office but during community work: Piątkowski gave out soup in a soup kitchen. Despite the adverse circumstances, or perhaps thanks to them, Rose stated, "He made a really fine impression on me, that of an Oxford man — a really cultured gentleman."<sup>56</sup>

Rose also tried to show his growing attachment to Polishness in translation from Polish into English. He translated the statutes of the Vilnius Philomath Society, which made a great impression on him;<sup>57</sup> above all however, he worked on Cieszkowski's writings. He was very happy to meet the philosopher's son, count August Adolf Cieszkowski, who came to Lhotka on 11–13 February 1918 invited by Rev. Kulisz. They talked about Rose's work, which Cieszkowski Jr. fully approved, giving the author *carte blanche* to publish the book. "I have the permission to use any proceeds from the sale, for the work on Poland, which will certainly mean something too!"<sup>58</sup> The couple of days they had spent together revealed they had a lot in common: they talked about philosophy, literature, and the count told the Roses about his impressions from Italy, Pope Leo XIII's encyclicals and the fascination with mysticism. Cieszkowski also took some of Rose's work to Cracow for consultation. The Canadian described him as follows: "He looks not a little like the father, the less massive in intellect. Smoke a great many cigarettes, has a raspberry nose. But has a good heart and is a practical man of affairs."<sup>59</sup>

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 21 Jan.

<sup>56</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 3, Folder 3.1. Diary 1918, 4 Feb.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 28 Jan.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 12 Feb.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 11 Feb.

In the winter of 1917/1918 Rose started attending Polish patriotic meetings organized in Cieszyn. On 2 February he was in the local National Home at a concert. It was not the aesthetic experiences that were most important to Rose but the feeling of belonging, which the meetings gave him. After four years of living in Silesia he wrote in the diary, not without satisfaction, that people made it clear to him he was one of them.<sup>60</sup> Every month reinforced that feeling: he stopped being alien; to the local Poles he was one of them and at the same time an outsider who could prove useful in their cause. He actually was: in the fall of 1918 along with the defeat of Austria-Hungary and the Czechs starting to take over the control of the borderland Rose was sent by the local leaders and members of the Polish National Council of the Cieszyn Silesia as a local representative to assist during the peace talks in Paris. He joined the Polish diplomats and was a valuable witness and adviser — as he put it himself, "amateur at peace-making."<sup>61</sup> The fact that he was a British citizen enhanced his credibility among the Western diplomats. He described the Paris experience in his memoirs, showing some behind-the-scenes of the diplomatic world and the Western leaders' lack of knowledge about Central and Eastern Europe.

## EPILOGUE

When years later, on 22 May 1926, during W. J. Rose's PhD graduation ceremony at the Jagiellonian University, Professor Stanisław Kot delivered a laudation in honor of the new doctor, he started by referring to Rose's war experience.

The wartime brought you closer to the Poles, you learned our language, customs, character, way of thinking. The Polish religious and ethical thought of the time of our nation's bondage, particularly the philosophy of August Cieszkowski, had aroused your interest and encouraged you to carry out research. The conditions created here eight years ago by the noble humanitarianism, which we value so much in the Anglo-Saxon race, put you in the focus of the activity of the American YMCA. Acting on its behalf you rendered considerable services to our army during the war with Russia, taking care of Polish soldiers. When peace returned, you devoted himself to the physical and moral education of Polish youth...<sup>62</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 2 Feb.

<sup>61</sup> *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, 58–106; Kwiatek, "William John Rose o Śląsku Cieszyńskim," 30–32.

<sup>62</sup> UBCA, William Rose funds, Box 1, Folder 9, Prof. Stanisław Kot's laudation.



The years spent in Silesia provided an enormously important experience for Rose. He was not a “stranger in the dark” any more, but a completely new person. He abandoned his classical studies and some of his beliefs. Previously convinced that the post-Vienna 1815 world order made sense, now he resolved to improve it. Rose seen through his sources is a man in the hands of Providence — a new missionary for peace, dedication to God and new post-Versaille Europe. According to Rose man is first of all committed to God, his religion, and to the people, with whom he is obliged to create a new Christian social order. Poland had become not only a research subject for him — he actually lived here for several years and then repeatedly returned here. His actions in favor of the Polish cause in London before and after World War II is a topic for a separate paper. He was a man who looked at Polish culture, history and society from the outside, and at the same time he had the experience of a researcher who had obtained the necessary tools and, like a modern anthropologist, penetrated the researched community. The Cieszyn Silesia was for him the “pocket of civilization” and he devoted a lot of his studies to it.<sup>63</sup> His extensive achievements in Polish studies (history, history of culture, sociology, Slavonic studies), including the modern — for that time — London lectures (from the second half of the 1930s) on Polish cities and the significance of the Vistula River put him among the best experts on Polish affairs in the mid-20th century. Interestingly, years later Peter Dembowski, who had been Rose’s student in Vancouver, mentioned that his professor spoke with a strong Silesian accent; therefore World War I influenced him also language-wise.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, it was thanks to the war that the young educated Canadian scholar became a full intellectual who used his experience and research potential for many years on both sides of the Atlantic. I think that in the *Introduction to the Polish Memoirs of William John Rose* David Stone offered the best summary of what World War I had been to the Canadian Slavist: “No one who met William John Rose in Winnipeg or Oxford before World War I would have suspected that he would become a leading authority on Poland, author of five books and numerous shorter pieces, director of the University of London’s School of Slavonic Studies, and an influential pioneer of Slavic Studies in Canada.”<sup>65</sup> Rose would never have achieved that if it had not been for his stay in the Cieszyn Silesia.

<sup>63</sup> Rose, “The Calling of Silesia,” 9–10; Rose, “The Duchy of Teschen as Zwischenland,” *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* 48, series 3, section 2 (1954): 87–97; Rose, “My Mission from Silesia,” *Polish Review* 2 (1918): 213–26; Rose, “W obronie Cieszyńskiego. Ze wspomnień osobistych,” *Przegląd Współczesny* 18, no. 3 (1939): 145–66, no. 4: 61–80, no. 8/9: 29–48. See more: Kwiatek, “William John Rose o Śląsku Cieszyńskim,” 21–33.

<sup>64</sup> Peter F. Dembowski, *Memoirs Red and White: Poland, The War and After* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2015), 156.

<sup>65</sup> *The Polish Memoirs of William John Rose*, IX.